1928

85a

Tuesday. 21st Feb.

52 T. S.

Dearest,

I take your snub very unkindly. I wrote you a long loving letter, & then you answer my husband. You dont deserve another word, but as I am temporarily unable to write my book, owing to a slight attack of the flu, I will give you the relics of my mind. It is a very slight attack, only a bad throat & a little temperature & I am up today, in fact have only been one day in bed, & hope to be recovered tomorrow— when I ought to be lunching with Colefax — but I shant. By the way, we dined with Ka the other night, & there I saw a letter to you from Colefax. Are you intriguing with her? Oh God! Ka was beyond belief worthy, scraped, dismal, patronising, oppressive. Not so much Ka herself: but her surroundings. Scores of tired damp muddy people called Campbell or Dent or something came in afterwards. And in some miraculous way she has completely altered your rooms — partly the lights, which are very bright; partly the spirit; & then the talk — all of reputable peers & politics; something like the Sargents with a dash of art. Wills' pictures were praised skyhigh. "What wonderful blues you give us", but Arnold-Forster. It makes one feel merely in the Alps!" The talk is very offhand & manly: but as vain as a peacock, or

85a ✓

somehow lets fall that they are all sold, some to the Cecils. "Spiffing that"
Meanwhile, the wretched Mark is heard sobbing upstairs.

Then we lunched with Mary — For an hour she is very nice, as the food is delicious, & I like Jack's stories for precisely 60 minutes. But when the clock strikes two, the ~~...~~ Princess turns into a rat — is that the story of Cinderella? — perhaps not — & one can't think of another word to say. Leonard yawns. But I admired the adroitness with which Mary discovered that Clive was back, & ~~asked~~ found out about his doings ~~at~~ in Berlin. She was rather depressed perhaps, & very affectionate. We had some ~~banter~~ banter about her quarrel with me. And I said she had bitten me over the left breast & left a blue stain like an Asp (See ~~Cle~~ Antony & Cleopatra, by Shakespeare) & she said she had only bitten me once, & then not really hard. I don't think Clive shows any disposition to go back to her. I see him constantly, but not so far alone, except at the play the other night; but then he was so excited by the presence of the Beau Monde that he was incapable of intimacy. He took me to a play about a schoolboy who falls in love with the master's wife. It's strange how sentimental one becomes about the young — Clive & I both cried — not at the same places, but both ~~about~~ at the thought of love & youth. Why is Julian depressed? Do you think he is in love? I should like to go & see him, but I don't suppose he would confide in me. I have just found his plays, so I shall write to him; & I think we may go up for a night to see Dadie act, ~~...~~ but the thought of

NYPL

866

Cambridge is slightly abhorrent. Its amazing weather here at the moment; everything coming out.

Have you heard all the Todd cabals? She came to tea with Clive here to discuss her new quarterly with Clive & us. Its to be Vogue, only quarterly. She is very anxious that you should do caricatures for her. & is writing to you. There is no sign that she means to give any power to Raymond or Francis, or to take their advice. I gather that she is putting up most of the money herself, & intends to be in complete control with Garland under her. This will be rather a blow to them; but she is a truculent determined old Brute, fatter & more snouted than ever — very disillusioned & commercial & without ideals: so I think she will take her own way.

It seems to me that everybody is going to Cassis at the same moment. Won't it be rather a bore? — I can't believe your amazing stories of the Male & Female parts of the Renault. Do the French sexualise their engines? The Ginger I know for a fact to be hermaphrodite, like the poet Cowper.

I'm afraid this letter is tedious in the extreme. I am rather muddle-headed. But I

866v

assure you there is nothing beyond a very slight 'flu the matter with me. (I put this in remembering how even the cold hearted like you exaggerate people's ills when they are abroad.) I am rather depressed, however, that I can't write, because my head is easily affected as you know, & I have only just time to finish Orlando before we go abroad. So please write me a long & loving letter: if Duncan would too, all the better; since I cherish for him a withered, ~~[illegible]~~ unspoken adoration, such as I imagine Aunt Dasy has for a Cavalry officer in Calcutta. As for Angelica, my sentimentality overcomes me beyond belief. When I saw a little girl in the street just now I almost burst into tears. Not that she was a patch on Angelica. Angelica has spoilt me for other children. Mark says I am the one of the nicest people he knows — the others being Mrs. Nevinson & Mrs. Swanwick — but even so, what a dried up little twig he is compared with her! I think she must have an extremely queer imagination: her sensibility is rather like mine. What higher praise can I give her? But in beauty she transcends my highest moments. Is she learning anything? What about God?

VB

NYPL

1928

83

52 Tavistock Sqre

Sunday
26th Feb.

Dearest.

This is a brief Business letter. Will you please take us rooms at the Teeds from April 2nd to April 9th ~~weeks~~ as you suggest ~~& Easter~~ as many rooms as possible, & arrangements they can supply. This seems now settled. We shall start on the 26th I think. I suppose if by any chance we could stay a few days, something could be arranged. But I'm afraid its not likely.

I saw Nan, & I think she may stay longer— & I believe the Roy Campbells are going to settle at Cassis— in fact I see you're already a Colony. I had

83v

an interesting talk with Clive, but haven't time to report it — except that he told me he could never go back to Mary as she had treated him so badly, & he has now discovered that all her views on art & literature were taken from him: He can now see no advantage in her, & her friends & ways are not nearly so congenial to him as ours are.

But we've got Roger coming in; & we are dining with Clive, so I must stop.

Moreover you owe me a letter, I think — but I won't be a grudging curmudgeon — will write soon.

Ly VB

Do keep a look out for any nice objects — chairs or pots — or chests of drawers — that I could buy if you don't want them. I hope to do some chaffering

HAMILL 2/10/68

standards are impossible though, & so long as Julian dont start telling the truth I shouldnt worry. LOVE TO ANGELICA. None to Duncan, because he's vile, heartless, & not worth having as a brother-in-love. So tell him. I saw his mother too; all her beauty recovered, & Pippa & Jumbo, who excel in the Sterling qualities of the English woman rather than that. Heres Nick. So goodbye, & write, dolphin, do. B

March 5th 1928

83a

52
Tavistock Square,
W.C.1.
Telephone: Museum 2621

Would you like me to print you some paper like this?

Dearest

I dont know whose turn it is to write—I expect yours; but your picture gets so much praise from the cognoscenti that I am feeling mercenary towards you. Also affectionate. Also desperate—& a thousand other things. About our rooms—Clive changes his plans daily—now he's going to Madrid, next to Cassis at once, now not at all. Perhaps he is more stable in his letters to you. So I dont see how to combine with him, & shall throw myself on your hands. Do the best for us you can—it'll only be a week alas, when I can wangle something.

I'm rather void of 'interesting gossip', I'm afraid, as I'm being as careful as a cat walking on eggs, & have refused Colefax & now Clive (to meet Lord Berners), my head not being quite established. We are going to Rodmell for three or four days, & there I shall finish Orlando, I hope.

I think I told you something of my last talk with Clive. He seems now completely disillusioned, & says that his feeling for Mary was founded on a misunderstanding of her real nature—or rather intellect, which he

83a✓

had thought subtle, exquisite, witty & original, & now finds merely a slavish copy of himself. Dont you think it odd that he never guessed in 13 years what we could see in ten seconds? She is now returning to her attack on Bloomsbury—that is, she asked Leonard to dinner, & wants to come to tea. But seriously, something must be done to control Clive. We see him every other day almost—not that we mind that—& every kind of supper & drink is lavished upon us: but when he meets a virgin, as he did the other night here (her name was Jenkins & she comes from Newnham) his behaviour is such that one wonders whether he's crazed or about to be so. He sat beside her on the sofa talking about her youth & his age (this is now his mania—that he's middleaged, & he goes to a beauty specialist about his hair, which is not growing however) & paying his compliments & talking about Romance & Prime Ministers & finally asked her to dinner—whether seriously or not I dont know. When you come back, I think you must quieten him. Also he never keeps off his own happiness—or unhappiness, as the case may be. Raymond caterwauled like the most lamentable housetop cat. I suppose his affair is on the rocks. He has never been so unhappy he says—the pair of them answered each other across the room like

NYPL

(2)

83b
~~826~~

52
Tavistock Square,
W.C.1.
Telephone: Museum 2621

a couple of nightingales — moulting nightingales. Then they say how happy I am; & how happy you are. I daresay you can imagine it at Cassis, & thank your stars the seas are between us. Still, talking of the seas, whats the use of them if Barbara can swim? A week of Barbara seems to me to outweigh 6 weeks of Ka, Colefax, & the rest. I can hardly picture it. One evening broke my spirit for 8 weeks, 7 days & ½. And who should ring up this very moment but Nick? In the extravagant hospitality of our hearts we agreed to let him come in for one hour after dinner — upon which he discloses the horrid fact that Saxon is attached to him. Still one hour after dinner isnt a whole week. Then youve Nan: so solitude seems to me to have its drawbacks. I suppose though, the car is now in perfect order. So is ours. Youll be amused to hear that I'm at last having French lessons. What will surprise you is that my volubility is supreme. — my teachers say I talk so well that I dont really need lessons. I suppose this is flattery — I'm afraid so — Still its wonderful how much easier it is to talk to some one professional. Occasionally I use phrases which have been out of use for a century or so. But once the blood is up one ~~cant~~ flurries along somehow: genders, or no genders. Angus seems strong & determined, & so far has not

826v

got a place. He hangs on to the hope of Agnews, but Roger doesn't seem sanguine; & I must say (this is not through my husband) his lethargy takes the life out of one, absolutely. I had a small ~~[illegible]~~ job which might have been worth £20 — to write a description of some pictures of Hardy's country — but he was so pessimistic & so languid, I gave it up. We have Miss Belsher now — a brisk girl, who says very tart things, but is already Mrs C's right hand.

Roger is a good deal ravaged I gather by Actons, Shoves, & so on. I haven't seen him, but Leonard dined there, & was given ~~raspberry~~ rhubarb fool made with Mary's hair oil. (By mistake.) But this was a mere bagatelle. The couple seem invincible & triumphant. NYPL Molly came to tea yesterday — a fair grind, I must say. I got on by saying she must ask me 3 questions, & then I ask her another 3. So I elicited an account of Copulating with Clive on a hard bed in a cold night at Asheham; & how she flared up next morning & went home. Desmond never much enjoyed copulation. As for Philip M., he never got that far — (I saw Ott. by the way, & find her fascinating: old, erratic, random, ribald; very shabby & dressed up in relics of plush at least 10 years old.) An odd thing about the MacCarthy menage is that Michael is so violently jealous of Rachel that they cant be in the house together. He flies into rages, for no reason, as Rachel is perfectly good humoured, & this thought to be sexual, as he threw an iron bar at when he was two. I saw Peter Lucas the other day, who says that Julian is charming & intelligent, but frightfully lazy — Peter's

(see P. 1)

HAMILL 2/10/08

mar 1928

84

52
Tavistock Square,
W.C.1.
Telephone: Museum 2621

Monday

This is not a letter only an urgent request: could you lend us your Michelin guide & send it off at once? Its out of print, & we cant get a copy, which is said to be essential. We will bring it — of course. with us —
Horrified at your accident.

Clive says we can have the other 2 rooms at Fontcreuse as he will be alone.